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## Forum and To The Editor

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# FORUM

The following is a letter sent following the 1970 Conference of PRWAD. Unfortunately it was not received early enough to be printed in the preceding issue. Nevertheless, it is felt that the readers of the *Journal* would be most interested in the contents.

Dr. Edwin W. Martin  
Associate Commissioner  
Bureau of Education for the Handicapped  
U. S. Office of Education  
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare  
Washington, D. C. 20201

Dear Mr. Martin:

This letter is for the purpose of commending the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped for its increasing activity and involvement in meeting some of the more important needs of deaf people of all ages.

Recently at the Convention of Professional Rehabilitation Workers With the Adult Deaf in Rochester, New York, I delivered a speech on the needs of deaf people in the 1970's. Among my remarks were the following:

1. "...the majority of teacher training programs in the area of deafness have practiced the unwritten policy of excluding deaf students from their programs and have been openly biased against

manual communication. The U.S. Office of Education funds most teacher training programs in deafness education, and has implicitly condoned these practices.”

2. “More and more agencies that serve the deaf are turning to consumers - deaf people themselves - for guidance in development of policies and practices that concern the deaf. Yet, until recently representation of the deaf community has been absent in the activities and administration of the U.S. Office of Education.”

Following my presentation I had the opportunity to talk with Mr. Malcom Norwood of your office. Mac filled me in on the important activities of the BEH over the last year or so, including (1) the letter that has gone out to teacher training programs forbidding exclusion of deaf trainees, (2) the advisory committee composed of deaf people that was recently formed by your office, and (3) Mac’s own appointment as Assistant Chief of MSCF and Liaison Officer for the NTID. I was highly pleased to hear of these developments, and now feel confident that the views of deaf people are instrumental in shaping the activities of your most important program.

May I express my personal thanks to you for your leadership in making it possible for deaf people to participate in policy making and administration of the BEH. I would like also to encourage you to continue to include deaf consumers in your advisory committees and in top level administrative positions. I am sure that by doing so your office will inspire in deaf people the same confidence they now have in the Social and Rehabilitation Service.

Sincerely,

Larry G. Stewart, Ed. D.  
Director  
Project With the Deaf

LGS,bs

cc: Editor, *Journal of Rehabilitation  
of the Deaf*

## TO THE EDITOR:

The article by Douglas J. N. Burke entitled "The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor of the Deaf as a Professional" in the October, 1970 issue of the *Journal of Rehabilitation of the Deaf* deserves to be read by all practicing and rehabilitation counselors in training programs. The article raises some general questions concerning the state of the profession and the direction in which the profession should be moving. Many of these issues have been long neglected and need to be given careful consideration.

On the other hand, some of the assumptions and statements which are made in this article also need to be given careful consideration since they appear to be in error. A specific issue raised by Mr. Burke is that the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is being trained more as a psychologist than as a person who is familiar with the vocational rehabilitation process. This assumption appears to be in error and may be based upon inadequate knowledge of all of the counselor training programs which are in operation, a gross over-generalization from one or two specific programs or a combination of the two. It is suggested that the idea which is being presented here is not correct. The people and educators who are training vocational rehabilitation counselors generally subscribe to the concepts that the vocational rehabilitation process is in and of itself a unique process and one which needs careful consideration. Suffice it also to say that the basic core of that particular process is counseling. By this is meant that each individual rehabilitation counselor, whether serving a general or a specific caseload, should be equipped with sufficient skills to communicate with and enter into an understanding of the problems which his client encounters. These particular problems may be in vocational adjustment or they may be in relation to psychological problems which arise from the disability itself. In either case the counselor must be in a position to understand and relate some of these problems to the client and help him arrive at a satisfactory solution to them.

In the sense as described above, the majority of rehabilitation counselor training programs place a great deal of emphasis upon the counselor's ability to interact with his clients and help them arrive at meaningful solutions to their problems. As Mr. Burke points out, there is a similarity between the field of psychological counseling and the field of rehabilitation counseling. That similarity lies within the counseling process itself. It is a dangerous generalization to assume that all rehabilitation counselor training

programs are attempting to train counseling psychologists and then force them into the rehabilitation process. It must be recognized that there are some programs whose major thrust is in the direction of training counseling psychologists, but the large majority of programs are not moving in that direction. All of the programs throughout the United States are generally operating within their own structure, within their own institutions and there has been no direct statement, as of this time, to indicate which way those programs should be going. It appears here that the author has himself come into contact with individuals who were either functioning in ways which were not compatible with his views or in ways which might not have been pertinent to the vocational rehabilitation process. In either case the generalization should not be made that all rehabilitation counselor training programs are in effect training only counseling psychologists. It is better to assume that the programs are training individuals who understand the counseling relationship and how that relationship is used to facilitate the rehabilitation process.

There appears to be throughout the article a definite negative reaction to the rehabilitation counselor training programs. Negative criticism of some of these programs is probably justified. There is, however, within this article a lack of any clear cut direction and specific information concerning which direction and how these programs should be revised. In the absence of any kind of recommendations for program change, it becomes apparent that the criticisms must be negated until such a time as specific recommendations concerning program change can be obtained from those people who do the criticizing. Criticism without constructive suggestions is really criticism with no apparent end in mind.

Richard E. Walker  
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